

Silent Doyle

Non-Sherlockian Conan Doyle and the Silent Film Era

by

Howard Ostrom

Part Two (1914 - 1915)

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)

1914 - "Universal Animated Weekly No. 117" - Arthur Conan Doyle as himself. Universal Pictures.

"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)

1914 - "Our Mutual Girl: Episode 22" - Arthur Conan Doyle & Lady Doyle in cameo appearances, Edward Brennan as Raffles (Dunbar). Reliance Films.

"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.

¹ Bergem, Phil, http://www.sherlocktron.com/SH_Films_2011-12-21_ACD-Films.pdf

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.'²

Famous Humorist Discusses Sausage

Irvin S. Cobb says there are 336 kinds of sausage, of which only three are edible. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle admits Mr. Cobb's count is correct but holds the opinion that only two can be eaten. Edward Brennan, soldier of fortune, author and actor, goes even further than Conan Doyle in disputing the American author's claim and holds that only one kind of sausage is eatable. Inasmuch as all three men are globe trotters of renown and have eaten sausage all over the world it may fairly be presumed that they are sausage experts.

The controversy started in this way: Cobb sat in the garden of Our Mutual Girl's house recently, recounting to Miss Phillips and Mayme Kelso his adventures abroad. Mr. Cobb told how he had annotated, connotated, analyzed and even eaten every known form of sausage. Soon after, Miss Phillips related Cobb's sausage statements to Edward Brennan, leading man in Our Mutual Girl serial. Mr. Brennan admitted that Cobb had made a correct tabulation of the different varieties, (an actor conceding, for once, that an author could be right in something), but held that only one kind of sausage is edible,—the kind that the diner prefers at the time he has his meal.

When Sir Arthur and Lady Doyle arrived in New York a few days ago on the Olympic they were met by Mr. Brennan. Brennan told Sir Arthur of Mr. Cobb's plunge into motion-picture work and incidentally repeated the Paducah humorist's rash statement in regard to sausage.

"If you have the opportunity," said Sir Arthur, with a twinkle in his eyes, "I wish you would tell him that in my travels through Germany I found all the kinds of sausage he did. But, whereas he found three varieties which were eatable, I found only two. Tell him that I

have made exhaustive experiments of the genus bologna, frankfurter and Wienerwurst and found that only two of the species can be digested."

Brennan promised to convey the English author's message to Cobb and at the first opportunity wrote Cobb of Sir Arthur's criticism. Cobb was romping with his little twin dachshunds on the lawn of his summer home at North Hatley, Quebec, when he received the letter. Pains-taking as he is in securing historical and other data for his books, Mr. Cobb at first was displeased at Sir Arthur's criticism.

Gathering "Wiensy" and "Wurst," his dachshunds, to his lap (Cobb's lap really is ample) he sat down and, in the heat of passion, dictated the following reply to Sir Arthur:

De gustibus non disputandum. Personally I prefer knock-wurst to cervelatwurst, and krautwurst to bratwurst. On occasion I am fond of tafelwurst and bawernwurst. If real hungry I will eat pinkelwurst and luebecker saucisohen just as readily as I will down a highly spiced ligature of bologna or a Coney Island hot dog. However, none of these can compare with blutwurst as it is served in Cologne, or with immaculate leberwurst and juicy wienerwurst as they roll out of the sausage fillers in Vienna.

The fifty-seven or more varieties of the genus saucisohen of Saxony were quite unfit to eat, principally because the license tags and collar plates of the ingredients were not properly ground. The dogs in Schmebush are called golf dogs because always they are bound for the links.

In some instances the hydraulic pressure used in compressing the ragout within the outer envelope was not suffi-



Irvin S. Cobb, Our Mutual Girl (Norma Phillips) and Mrs. Knickerbocker (Mayme Kelso.)

cient to ensure a compact product and the rattling of what once were leather collars between the walls of the surrounding capsule gave forth a hollow sound which faintly resembled the bark of a canine wraith. Reasoning from these premises, I surmised—and rightly, I think you will now agree with me—that these species of the genus are not comestibles in the strict sense of the term.

I await your reply, feeling confident that my judgment will be vindicated.

While at Our Mutual Girl's house on Long Island Mr. Cobb recently posed for the Mutual movies. Four hundred feet of film were used to encompass Mr. Cobb's bulk. Panoramic views of the Kentucky leviathan were taken from all angles, head on, and at right angles, while fifty feet of celluloid were used up in filming the subject's sausage-container.

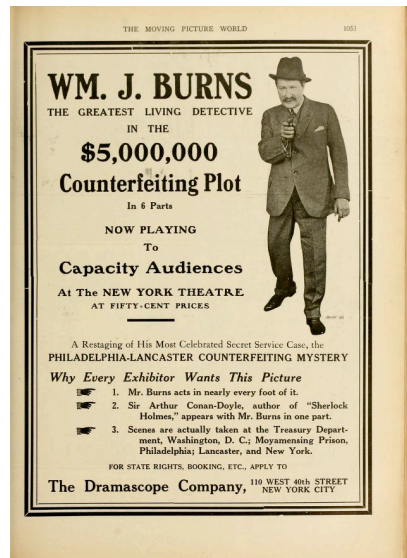
While filming "Our Mutual Girl", Doyle, leading man Edward Brennan, and famous humorist Irvin S. Cobb got involved in heated discussion on the number of edible sausages there are!

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."³

"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."⁴

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."⁵

³ "Motion Picture News" Vol. 9 - Jun. 1914 Pg. 68

⁴ "Picture Stories Magazine" Vol. 3, Sept. 1914 Pg. 113

⁵ "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 21 Jul. - Sep. 1914 pg. 1830

(1915)

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.

Ten thousand dollars was the offer recently made by the Kalem Company to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle for a series of twenty detective stories for them to make into pictures after the style of their "Girl Detective Series" and "Mysteries of the Grand Hotel." Doyle refused the offer as he is filling all his spare time with a Volunteer training corps. Doyle, who was a war correspondent, is very keen on soldiering, and trains and drills with a corps near his home at Crowborough, Sussex.

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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.

1915 - "Brigadier Gerard" - Lewis Waller (1860 - 1915) as Brigadier Gerard, Madge Titheradge (1887 - 1961) as Countess de Rochequelaune and A. E. George (1869 - 1920) as Napoleon. The Barker Company (U.K.).

"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 picturized 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."⁶

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



Escena de "El Brigadier Gerard" (Universal).

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."⁷

Lewis Waller in Universal Picture

LEWIS WALLER, the famous English actor, makes his bow to Universal spectators on April 10 in the five-reel Red Feather feature, "Brigadier Gerard," Sir Conan Doyle's well known comedy-drama of the Napoleonic period which was first produced at the Imperial Theater, London, in March, 1906.

Some wonderful sets and backgrounds are introduced into the picture which tells the story of a braggart soldier adventurer in Napoleon's army, who, unlike most of his kind, is willing to back up his extravagant boasts with his sword. Napoleon engages the adventurer to recover some papers of state which he had left in the Tuilleries. Talleyrand also endeavors to recover the papers, but his emissaries are put to rout by the quick-witted Brigadier. When Talleyrand himself attempts to take a hand,



The Late Lewis Waller.

he is discomfited and outwitted by Napoleon's secret agent in some dramatic scenes which are all the more appealing because of the comedy element which enters into them.

In the film, which was produced abroad for the Universal, Mr. Waller makes his last appearance either in the flesh or on the screen. Upon Mr. Waller's death about a month ago a carved wood bust of the actor as Brigadier Gerard, presented to Mr. Waller by Sir A. Conan Doyle, was sold for £17 10s. to an agent of the Universal in London.

Sadly for Louis Weller "Brigadier Gerard" would be his "...last appearance either in the flesh or on the screen. Upon Mr. Waller's death about a month ago a carved wood bust of the actor as Brigadier Gerard, presented to Mr. Waller by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, was sold... to an agent of the Universal in London."⁸

⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brigadier_Gerard

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 him. 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 he 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"⁹

1915 - "The Firm of Girdlestone" - Edna Flugrath (1892 - 1966) as Kate Horston, Fred Groves (1880 - 1955) as Ezra Girdlestone, and Charles Rock (1866 - 1919) as John Girdlestone. London Film Production (U.K.).

"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 <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/45376610>

"The Firm of Girdlestone"
 Five-Part Vitaphone Feature Released October 9 on
 V-L-S-E. Reviewed by G. W. Graves

SIR Arthur Conan Doyle's story as translated into the language of the screen by Bannister Merwin will entertain the spectator and keep his interest, although its action is none too exhilarating and its dramatic form sometimes gives place to the narrative. Interpreting the piece we have a cast of which all the members are competent. Edna Flugrath has the



A jolly little spot in "The Firm of Girdlestone."

largest apportionment of dramatic scenes and she turns most of these to very good effect. The two heavies who ruthlessly pursue her are Fred Groves and Charles Rock. The spectator becomes quite imbued with the disagreeableness of their parts and quite worked up over their arch-villainy, which reflects credit on their acting as well as on the author's conception. And as for the hero, there is none—that is, there is no active hero. The girl is saved solely by her own intuition and her enemies are consumed in the heat of their own wickedness. There was a young man present who might have been a hero, but his part does not ascend above just being a lover. This negative male role is taken by Hayford Hobbs. Harold Shaw, who directed, has worked for realism and "class," and has not fallen short of his ambitions. Bits of the city of London used from time to time as settings, serve excellently to accentuate the English atmosphere which pervades the story. Sir A. Conan Doyle's spirit is well maintained. The picture will easily find favor with the majority of people.

The main plot of the story has to do with the diabolical persecutions of a girl by her sordid guardian, whose will it is that she marry his son. This will bring a large piece of money to the tottering "firm of Girdlestone," of which he is the head. Kate's persistent refusal to succumb to his mesmerism (for it is all of that), and his own realization that her death will be the solution of his troubles, leads him to resort to subtle and uncanny methods to gradually undermine her health and mental resistance. She is held in captivity in Girdlestone's country house and is led to believe that her lover has forsaken her; a lie and scheme invented by the wicked father and son to further their purposes.

Finally old Girdlestone, realizing the inefficacy of his methods, tries other tactics. He has his son, Ezra, write a note to her, saying that in spite of what has happened, he (Ezra) is her friend, and will help her to escape if she will meet him at a certain place that night. Kate senses the true purpose of this and does not venture out. Her jealous maid, however, secretly reads the note, misinterprets it, makes up as Kate and goes in her place. Thus the poor maid goes to the slaughter. Soon after the killing, aid arrives, due to a call for help Kate previously managed to send out. When the murderers have dragged the body to the railroad track they are there confronted by Kate, followed closely by a rescue party. At the sight of what they think is an apparition the murderers flee in terror and meet their death over the brink of a cliff.

Article is from "Motography" magazine (Oct. 1916) Vol. 16, Page 889.

"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 Vitaphone standard of pictures. I am very much surprised to see Vitaphone permit a picture like this one leave their studio."¹⁰

"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

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