

Silent Sherlock Sherlock Holmes and the Silent Film Era

by

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Part Eleven (1914 Continued)

1914 - "Some Hero" - Charles De Forrest, (1877 - 1944) as Sherlock Doyle. Crystal Film Co.

"Some Hero" - Independent Film Stories column - "Vivian, an heiress, is persecuted by her fiendish Uncle, who is anxious to gain possession of her wealth. She writes to Sherlock Doyle, the famous detective, asking him to protect her. Doyle goes to her mansion. The Uncle and the butler, his accomplice, decide to kidnap Vivian at once. They take her to an underground cellar, with Doyle in pursuit. They tie her to a post and light the fuse to a bomb. Doyle is just in time to pick the sputtering bomb up and hurl it through a window. The pair then escape. Doyle later leaves the girl for a while. She is captured by some circus Indians and forced to don their costume. Doyle also disguises as an Indian and effects her complete rescue. Numerous thinning adventures overtake the fair Vivian, but Doyle arrives in the nick of time, utterly putting to rout the base conspirators. Doyle wins the heart and hand of the fair and wealthy Vivian."¹

1914 - "Our Mutual Girl" - Arthur Conan Doyle (1859 - 1930) as Himself. Reliance Film Co.



¹ "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 20 Apr. - Jun. 1914 pg. 1164

"Our Mutual Girl" - Independent Film Stories column - "Raffles," the gentleman burglar - in private life, Mr. Courtland Van Dunbar went down to the gangsters' head quarters to impress them with his authority. ... he succeeded in disarming the gangsters and delivering Ada Taylor. Dunbar's eye fell on a headline in the newspaper - "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 Dunbar went down the bay on a revenue cutter to meet the Olympic. He succeeded in gaining 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

1914 - "Willie Walrus, Detective" - William Wolbert (1883 - 1918) as Willie Walrus. Joker Film Co.



"Willie Walrus, Detective" - Independent Film Stories column - "Detectin' iz the art of figgerin' out what the other fellow did from what he didn't do" This might have been the motto of "Willie Walrus, Detective," but it is not. Willie

² "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 20 Apr. - Jun. 1914 pg. 1598

figures what the fellow didn't do from what he did do. Willie is the town constable with an office full of special formulas, special traps and special weapons for special varieties of crimes and misdemeanors. Willie is called upon to find Dolly, the missing bovine of Mr. & Mrs. Farmer Hicks. With true Hawkshaw instincts, Willie carries along a magnifying glass, his ally in the search for evidence. The glass reveals several stands of red hair. Willie sets out to find those who have or have not red hair. Finally when the embryonic Sherlock purloins a young women's 'store curls' she gives chase. He is pursued into his own trap. At the critical juncture a neighboring farmer returns to Mr. and Mrs. Hicks their missing provider of lacteal fluid. Willie escapes with a little rough handling by his victims."³

1914 - "Footprints" - Al W. Filson (1857 - 1925)(possibly?) as Teever, the disciple of Sherlock Holmes. Selig Polyscope Co.

"Footprints" - Independent Film Stories column - "Paula and Robert are betrothed and Mrs. Gray gives a party in honor of her son at her country house where Paula is a guest. A big moment of this function is when Mrs. Gray shows her guests a valuable diamond necklace, which is rapturously admired by Paula. That same night the necklace disappears. This news is kept from the guests, but Robert finds a handkerchief on the floor in the room and secretly sends for Teever, the noted detective. This disciple of Sherlock Holmes finds a naked footprint upon the waxed floor, evidently made by the thief taking the diamond. In order to find the duplicate foot he cleverly suggests "a bare-foot party for the ladies." Mrs. Gray can not engage in this as she is bed-ridden for the day by rheumatism and Paula is among the missing. The detective has the imprint of all the fair feet and finds that none correspond with the copy on the floor of Madame's boudoir. Paula rushes in late to join the party, and the detective is astonished to find that her footprints correspond with those on the waxed floor. Poor Robert is heart-broken over this, but swears Teever to silence. That night he is awoken by an unusual sound; he calls Teever and tells him that a woman has left the house. They follow her in silence. It is Robert's mother in her nightgown walking in her sleep. She goes to a big garden urn and places something in it. Then Robert awakens his mother and escorts her back to the house. The detective measures the foot-print left by the dew-wet foot upon the stone walk and finds it identical with that of Paula, and the one left on the waxed floor. Both men hurry back to the urn, and there hidden among the plants is the casket containing the diamonds. There had been no thief. Mrs. Gray had concealed the diamonds there in her sleep as a

³ "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 21 Jul. - Sep. 1914 pg.116

somnambulist, and so Paula's wedding bells rang without a doubt or discord."⁴

1914 - "Izzy The Detective" - Max Davidson (1875 - 1950) as Izzy. Reliance Film Co.



"Izzy The Detective" - Independent Film Stories column - "Izzy, because of his own laziness, has lost his job. Misfortunes never come singularly, however, and hot upon the heels of this disaster Izzy learns that his girl has deserted him. Despite all his efforts to connect with a new position, Izzy fails to do so. He has about plumbed to the depths of despair when he reads the advertisement of a fake detective agency: "Be a Sleuth - Ten Lessons for Ten Dollars." Izzy always had a sneaking ambition to be a regular Sherlock Holmes and he at once subscribes his ten dollars. He receives his ten printed lessons together with a number of placards advertising rewards for criminals, who long since have passed to their fathers. The office boy employed by the detective agency in taking the photographs of the criminals to the printers, has lost one of them and in order to hide his own carelessness substitutes the photograph of a prominent English nobleman then visiting the city. Izzy, of course, picks out the photo of the nobleman and has the latter passes through the streets has him arrested. His false accusation enmeshes him still deeper in difficulties and poor Izzy is put in solitary confinement for insulting the representative of a foreign government. After spending some time in jail he is released and warned to get a regular job or be imprisoned again on a charge of vagrancy."⁵

They could have titled this one "Be a Sleuth – 10 Lessons for 10 Guineas".

⁴ "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 21 Jul. - Sep. 1914 pg. 472

⁵ "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 21 Jul. - Sep. 1914 pg. 480

1914 - "Held For Ransom" - Actors unknown. I. S. Plaut Film Co.



Scene from "Held for Ransom" (I. S. Plaut).



Scene from "Held for Ransom" (I. S. Plaut).

"Held For Ransom" - A Four Reel I. S. P. Detective Story Release. Reviewed by R.C. McElravy. - "The producers of this film have chosen a simple, straight-forward plot and relied on ingenious and exciting incidents to furnish the proper degree of novelty. In this they have been quite successful and the four reels contain much of an entertaining nature. The daughter of Millionaire Brewster is abducted in the opening scenes and Byrnes, king of detectives, is called upon to recover her. The subsequent happenings follow in rapid-fire succession and perhaps in a little too mechanical way. But novel touches here and there keep the observer interested. The den of crooks suggested the stronghold of Prof. Moriarty in William Gillette's production of 'Sherlock Holmes', but this film offering at no time possesses the tension of the well know stage drama. The detective's impersonation of the gang leader - his capture - the pocket mirror signal - the dwarf in the mysterious bag - the message sent by a carrier pigeon - all of these devices are welcome in a yarn of this character. Such incidents often serve to hold the attention better than bald efforts at sensationalism. The crooks are finally rounded up and the girl rescued, but not until the ransom money has been obtained. The entire fourth reel is given to chase, the gang on a motor launch pursued by automobile and motorcycle. This is conventional, but becomes generally exciting in certain aspects. One thriller consists of a fall from a high bridge by one of the crooks, when the detective cuts the rope. Then comes the crowning sensation, in which the sleuth is seen climbing up Eiffel tower after the gang leader. The latter makes some perilous swings across the heavy framework and is last seen falling from the top of the immense structure - a dummy, of course, being providentially substituted in this instance. For a story lacking any originality of plot this works out in an entertaining manner.

It is not a gripping production, except perhaps in the final scenes, but the incidents are fresh and pleasing. The photography is generally clear."⁶

1914 - "The \$5,000,000 Counterfeiting Plot" - William J. Burns (1861 - 1932) as himself, and Arthur Conan Doyle as himself. Dramascope Film Co.

"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."⁷

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⁶ "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 21 Jul. - Sep. 1914 pg. 581

⁷ "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 21 Jul. - Sep. 1914 pg. 1830

William J. Burns, known as "America's Sherlock Holmes," is famous for having conducted a private investigation clearing Leo Frank of the murder of Mary Phagan, and for serving as the director of the B.O.I., predecessor to the F.B.I.⁸



"The \$5,000,000 Counterfeiting Plot" - A member of a counterfeiting gang gives a forged note to his daughter. When she spends it on a dress the note ends up in the hands of the secret service, who then bring the entire gang to justice. For the second time in 1914, we see Arthur Conan Doyle play himself in a minor movie role.

1914 - "The Seventh Prelude" - Richard Travers (1885 - 1935) as Jack Gordon. Essanay Film Co.



⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_J._Burns

"The Seventh Prelude" - Licensed Special column - "This two-part photoplay, written by Lillian Bennet-Thompson, is an unusually interesting detective story, but reminds one somewhat of Sherlock Holmes and his pal, Dr. Watson. A wealthy man is shot while playing Chopin's 'Seventh Prelude' and it keeps one guessing as to who fired the shot. A detective examines the Warren mansion and after a desperate struggle, captures the culprit. It holds the attention of the audience all through."⁹

1914 - "The Foreign Spies" - Arthur Finn as Detective Finn. Regent Film Co.

"The Foreign Spies"... is a detective story. The hero is one of a type -- a Sherlock Holmes kind of man -- and the quarry is a trio of spies. ..." ¹⁰

1914 - "Shorty and Sherlock Holmes" - Shorty Hamilton (1879 - 1925) as Shorty. Broncho Film Co.



"Shorty and Sherlock Holmes" - Independent Film Stories - "Shorty, who has been reading 'The Sign of the Four,' is much taken up with the idea of becoming a detective. He thinks it a great idea, and going out to the stable pulls enough hair from a horse's tail to make himself a beard; this he dons together with a 'sleuth hat', and getting himself a large microscope, defies the world to conceal a thing from him. He trails everybody in camp, and

⁹ "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 21 Jul. - Sep. 1914 pg. 960

¹⁰ "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 21 Jul. - Sep. 1914 pg. 1215

spies upon them so much that he becomes a pest and they frame up a 'jool' robbery. Norah, the cook, pretends to have lost her diamond pin, and Shorty undertakes to find it for her. That same night the village post office is robbed, and Shorty who is hunting for the diamond pin happens upon the robbers, who are burying their loot. They overpower Shorty and binding his hands and feet, make him their prisoner. While they are reconnoitering, Shorty burns the ropes off his hands with his trusty microscope. When he hears the robbers returning he throws himself back onto the sand, and gives the appearance of still being bound. While the robbers have their backs turned he covers them with his pistol. He shoots one robber and marches the other before him to the village sheriff, the robber carrying the mail pouch containing the loot. Ella, the village post mistress, who has been taken into custody pending an investigation, is released when Shorty appears with the real robber."¹¹

"Shorty and Sherlock Holmes" - Comments on the Films - "Imitations of Sherlock Holmes are becoming very numerous, but Shorty Hamilton manages to get some fun out of it in this two reel number. The cowboys fake a robbery and in trying to trace this down Shorty discovers some real bandits and gets their loot, thus becoming the town hero. The photography is good and the story runs along in an entertaining manner. It makes altogether a better ranch comedy than the average."¹²

1914 - "The Amateur Detective" - Ernest C. Warde (1874 - 1923) as Pat. Thanouser Film Co.



¹¹ "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 22 Oct.. - Dec. 1914 pg. 404

¹² "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 22 Oct. - Dec. 1914 pg. 493

"The Amateur Detective" - Independent Film Stories - "Jane and Pat, her policeman admirer, whom she has taught to believe himself a second Sherlock Holmes, think they have discovered a Black Hand plot against Mr. Wise, Jane's employer. In reality the mysterious signs they have seen on the back fence are Jack's secret language to Betty, his sweetheart, who father Wise considers too young to have a beaux. Betty and Jack find out that Jane has mistaken their innocent hieroglyphics for Black Hand signals, so they scheme to get father worried, to have Jack masquerade as a detective, sub do a bogus blackhead gang, and then, throwing off his disguise, claim Betty as his reward. Pat precipitates matters, however, by arresting the young hero prematurely. Jack is obligated to unmask. But Mr. Wise, seeing the joke, gives Betty to Jack."¹³

For those who have noticed that a good number of these films involve The Black Hand, I invite you to check out this little ditty of a silent film titled, 'The Black Hand (1906) - World's 1st Mafia Movie - Wallace McCutcheon' at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MWRq2EHHFQY>

To finish up the year 1914 we give you a list of foreign Sherlock Holmes silent films.

1914 - "Where is She" - M. Gregers as Sherlock Holmes. Filmfabrikken (Denmark).

1914 - "Night of Terror" or, **"En rædsom Nat"** - Emilie Sannom as Sherlock Holmes. Filmfabrikken (Denmark).

1914 - "Sherlock Holmes vs. Dr. Mors" or, **"Sherlock Holmes contra Dr. Mors"**- Ferdinand Bonn as Sherlock Holmes. Vitascope Pictures (Germany).



¹³ "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 22 Oct. - Dec. 1914 pg. 1586

1914 - "Karlchens Dreams as Sherlock Holmes" or, "Karlchens Traum als Sherlok Holmes" - Actors unknown. Lloyd Films (Germany).

1914 - "Sherlock Holmes rolled by Rigadin" or, "Sherlock Holmes roulé par Rigadin" - André Simon as Sherlock Holmes. Pathé Frères (France).

1914 - "Gontran émule de Sherlock Holmes" - René Gréhan as Gontran. Éclair Films (France).

1914 - "Più forte che Sherlock Holmes II" or, "Stronger Than Sherlock Holmes II" - Domenico Gambino as Salterelli. Itala Film Co. (Italy).

Then finally from Germany we have the first two films from what will be a series of seven related stories known as "Der Hund von Baskerville" series. There is no Dr. Watson in this series.



1914 - "Der Hund von Baskerville I or- Das einsame Haus" or, "The Lonely House"- Alwin Neuss as Sherlock Holmes. Vitascope Pictures (Germany).

1914 - "Der Hund von Baskerville II"- Alwin Neuss as Sherlock Holmes. Vitascope Pictures (Germany).

End of Part Eleven
1915 Begins in Part Twelve

