

Silent Sherlock

Sherlock Holmes and the Silent Film Era

by

Howard Ostrom

Part Thirteen (1916)

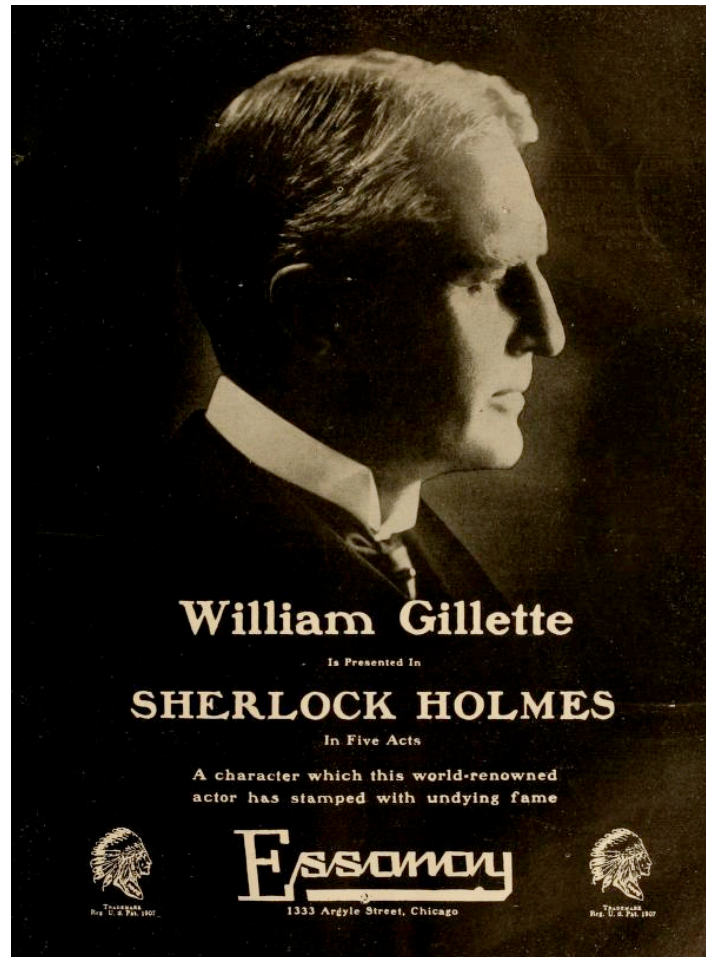
The film may have been thought at one time to be forever lost**, but the actor William Gillette will never be forgotten. Yes the year was 1916, and the great William Gillette, the stage actor who had brought the role of Sherlock Holmes to life, had recently joined the ranks at Essanay Studios at age 63! We can't bring the film back, but in this section of this series of essays I will give you reviews, plot summaries, ads, and photos (all that I can find) to attempt to give you a taste of what it must have been like to see the most famous Sherlock Holmes of his time in film. Oh, and by the way, we will give you the rest of Sherlock Holmes in silent films for the year 1916 too! This includes H. A. Saintsbury in "The Valley of Fear", and Douglas Fairbanks in "The Mystery of the Leaping Fish", a Holmes you will have to see to believe.

1916 - "Sherlock Holmes" - William Gillette (1853 - 1937) as Sherlock Holmes and Edward Fielding (1875 - 1945) as Dr. Watson. Essanay Film Co.

Chicago News Letter - "Essanay has signed William Gillette to appear in his well known plays, 'Sherlock Holmes' and 'Secret Service.' Mr. Gillette will begin work on the first of these in the near future."¹

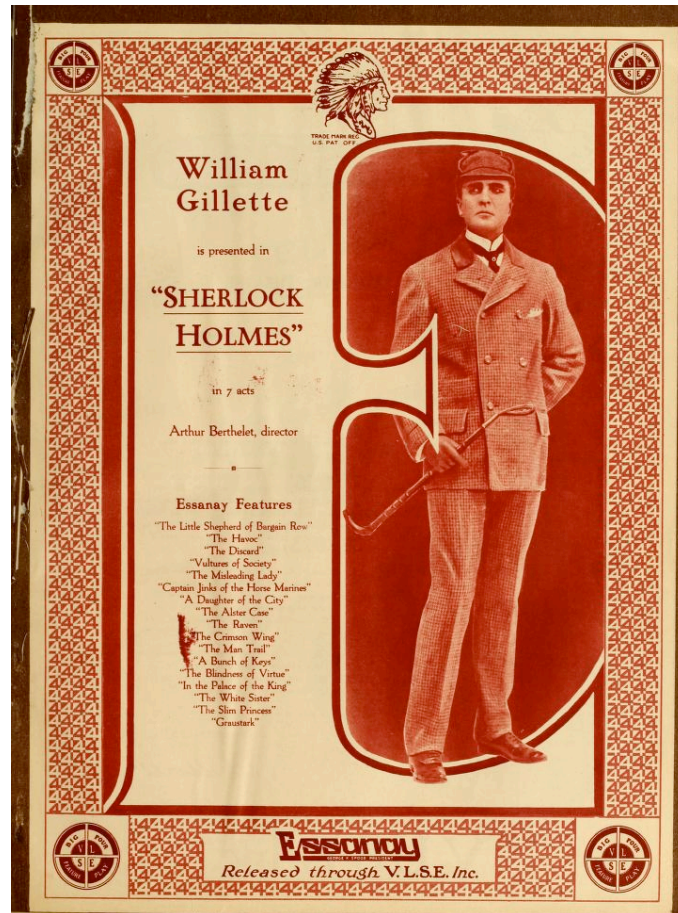
Gillette in Essanay Production - "Famous Author-Manager-Player Will be Seen in 'Secret Service' and 'Sherlock Holmes.' 'Secret Service' and 'Sherlock Holmes' will be produced by Essanay with William Gillette, and released as a multiple reel feature on the V-L-S-E program. This star, acknowledged one of the greatest actors of the American stage, has contracted to appear in the photoplay versions of his phenomenal stage successes. He has just begun work before the camera for 'Sherlock Holmes,' which will be the first release. 'Secret Service' will follow shortly after. Mr. Gillette has just closed an unusually successful season and went to Essanay immediately after his last performance. He has never before consented to adapt to pictures the plays which he wrote and made famous in playing the leading roles. The popularity awaiting picturization of these two gripping dramas has been recognized by

¹ "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 27 Jan. - Mar. 1916 pg.1477



producers for some time, but reportedly Mr. Gillette has rejected all offers until he agreed to play for Essanay. William Gillette has had a stage career rivaled by few actors of all time. He was born in Hartford, Conn., July 24, 1855, the son of Francis Gillette, long a United States Senator from Connecticut. Following graduation from a preparatory school young Gillette choose the stage as his profession and played in stock companies while completing his education with special courses at The University of New York, Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Boston University. In 1877 he undertook theatrical work exclusively and played with stock companies successively at New Orleans, New York, Boston, Cincinnati, and Louisville. By this time he had won national recognition and decided to attempt the staging of several plays which he had written for himself. This he did with encouraging success, and since he has written everything in which he has appeared. 'Sherlock Holmes' added to his fame and later 'Secret Service' upheld the reputation he had won. Mr. Gillette is ideally suited to an active

drama of tense situations, and the screen undoubtedly will add to his laurels. Mr. Gillette is a member of the National Institute of Arts and Letters."² Notes on the Trade column - "Ernest Maupain takes one of the principal parts in "Sherlock Holmes," supporting William Gillette. As the leader of the London crooks, this Essanay heavy actor has a part which he enjoys and which gives him every opportunity to display his ability. Mr. Maupain is thoroughly conversant with the part, having played it before on the stage in Paris."³



V-S-L-E Special Features - ... "The next big special production is the Essanay film version of "Sherlock Holmes," in seven reels, with William Gillette in the part he has invested with world-wide success on the stage. It is scheduled for release, May 15th."⁴...

² "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 27 Jan. - Mar. 1916 pg. 1656

³ "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 28 Apr. - Jun. 1916 pg. 655

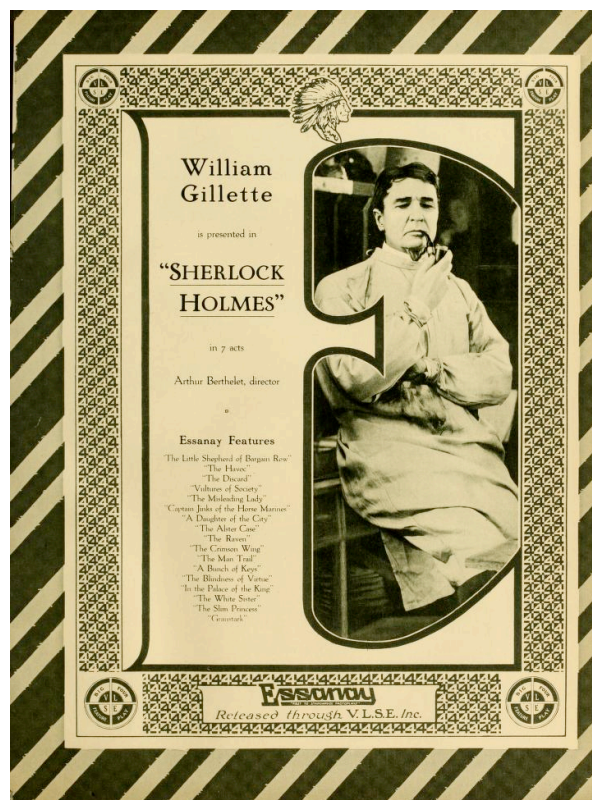
⁴ "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 28 Apr. - Jun. 1916 pg. 962



"Sherlock Holmes" - (Essanay) - (Seven Parts, May 15) - Stories of the Films
 The Cast: Sherlock Holmes (William Gillette); Alice Faulkner (Marjorie Kay);
 Professor Moriarty, Emperor of Crooks (Ernest Maupain); Dr. Watson
 (Edward Fielding); Benjamin Forman (Stewart Robbins); Sir Edward Leighton
 (Hugh Thompson); Baron von Stalburg (Ludwig Kriess); James Larrabee
 (Mario Majeroni); Sidney Prince (William Postance); Cragin (Chester Beery);
 Tim Leary (Frank Hamilton); "Lightfoot" McTeague (Fred Malatesta); Parsons
 (Norrie); Madge Larrabee (Grace Reals); Therese, a Maid (Miss Ball);
 "Billy" (Burford Hampton); A "Suffraget" (Marion Skinner); directed by
 Arthur Bertelet.

"Sherlock Holmes while out for a stroll with Dr. Watson, meets a beautiful woman. They are mutually attracted, but pass without recognition. Later Holmes is engaged by a noble family to recover papers involving the family in a scandal, and which are in the hands of a woman, who's sister was ruined by one of the members of the noble family. She is holding them to

get revenge. Holmes discovers that the woman that holds these papers is the one that he had passed in the street, and to whom he was so singularly attracted. He tricks her out of the papers, but returns them to her, telling her that he believes that she will eventually give them to him of her own accord. He points out to her how much better it is to let the matter rest than to connect her own name with scandal to get revenge, not only on the man who caused her sister's unhappiness, but on the innocent members of his family. Holmes then goes to Watson's house, where he sends a note for the woman who holds the papers to meet him there. His cab driver, who is waiting outside, is the leader of the band of crooks. Holmes has penetrated his disguise, although the crook does not know this. Holmes brings him into the house under a pretext and there slips handcuffs on him. He has also sent for the nobleman to come to Watson's house. He has Dr. Watson place the woman in a rear room so that she can overhear his conversation. He then turns over a package of blank papers to the nobleman, pretending he thinks they are the right ones. The nobleman berates him for having been duped. Sherlock admits it, and cries that he is ruined. The woman then rushes into the room and through her love for Sherlock gives up the real papers. The nobleman leaves satisfied and as Watson shows him to the door, Holmes slips his arms about the woman, and tells her of his love."⁵



⁵ "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 28 Apr. - Jun. 1916 pg. 1228

Reviews of Current Films - "Sherlock Holmes" - Reviewed by James S. McQuade

"William Gillette as Sherlock Holmes, in moving pictures, even at the ripe age of 63 years, was 'a consummation devoutly to be wished.' For five consecutive years he toured this country, England, and Canada in his famous play, during which theatergoers never tired looking at his characterization of Conan Doyle's great detective. A few more years and it would have become impossible for Mr. Gillette to take the part with the physical vigor that would recall his best efforts of the old days to his international-wide admirers, and at the same time would leave in comparatively permanent form, his Sherlock Holmes for the delight of future generations. I did not ask whether it had been done or not, but I hope that Essanay took two good negatives of this subject, so that the period of future time during which positive reproductions can be successfully made, shall be prolonged to the classic limit. Mr. Gillette



acts like an old-timer before the camera, and is just as natural and forceful as we have seen him on the stage. The scene in Edelweiss Cottage, where the Larrabees hold Alice Faulkner as a prisoner, shows Mr. Gillette as the Sherlock Holmes of years ago. The seeming lapses into a sleepiness of manner and action suddenly resolve into a display of imperiousness and overpowering mentality and will. The greatest scene in the photoplay, as it was in the drama, is that showing the test of wit and cunning and masterful resourceful ability between the detective and Professor Moriarty (the Emperor of Crooks), in the home of the former. Mr. Gillette never had a stronger opposite than Ernest Maupain in this great scene. This fine character actor well merits the distinction of being entombed in films for coming years with the master of all detective impersonators. Miss Marjorie

What the Critics Say of "Sherlock Holmes"

"The Essanay Company has scored a clean and decisive knockout with the film version of William Gillette's stage success—'Sherlock Holmes.' It is not merely a photoplay with a punch—it is a screen triumph with a varied assortment of punches, and veritable triphammer punches, all of them. 'Sherlock Holmes' goes to the public bearing the stamp of critical approval of all who witnessed its private showing. It is an undoubted super-feature of film land!"

New York Dramatic Mirror.

"'Sherlock Holmes' is a picture that can be given unqualified praise and is a credit to author, actors, director and photographers. It is one of the most effective pictures ever undertaken. From the beginning to the end of this seven part feature there is not a dull moment. The fade-in and fade-out process used in this production is positively the best that has been accomplished."

New York Morning Telegraph.

"A big winner. With the name of William Gillette and the famous Sherlock Holmes, this should be a tremendous box office attraction. Certainly the film is well enough done to prove a real winner. It should pull big business."

Wid Gunning's Independent Reviews.

"William Gillette as Sherlock Holmes in moving pictures is a fitting consummation to this artist's wonderful stage career. Mr. Gillette before the camera is just as natural and forceful as we have seen him on the stage."

Moving Picture World.

"The old classic which seems to hold its youth better than most things reaches the screen in excellent form. William Gillette appears to unusual advantage in the film version. The direction of the picture by Arthur Berthel is excellent, and the supporting cast is capable."

Motion Picture News.

Released through V. L. S. E.



TRADEMARK
Reg. U. S. Pat. 1907

ESSANAY
GEORGE K. SPOOR, PRESIDENT



1333 Argyle Street, Chicago, Ill.

Kay's Alice Faulkner and the Dr. Watson of Edward Fielding are both meritorious. Indeed, the cast is commendable throughout. 'Billy' (Burford Hampton), the 'Buttons' in Sherlock's home; Sidney Prince (William Postance), James and Madge Larrabee (Mario Majeroni and Miss Grace Reals), Sir Edward Leighton (Hugh Thompson) and Baron von Stalburg (Ludwig Kriess), all stand out prominently in the action in the films. The settings are worthy of the acted production, and these and talented direction must be credited to Director Arthur Bethélet. The release will be made through V-L-S-E, Inc."⁶

Mcquade's review of Sherlock Holmes, what an irony he hoped Essanay would make 2 good negatives, given that the film is lost.**

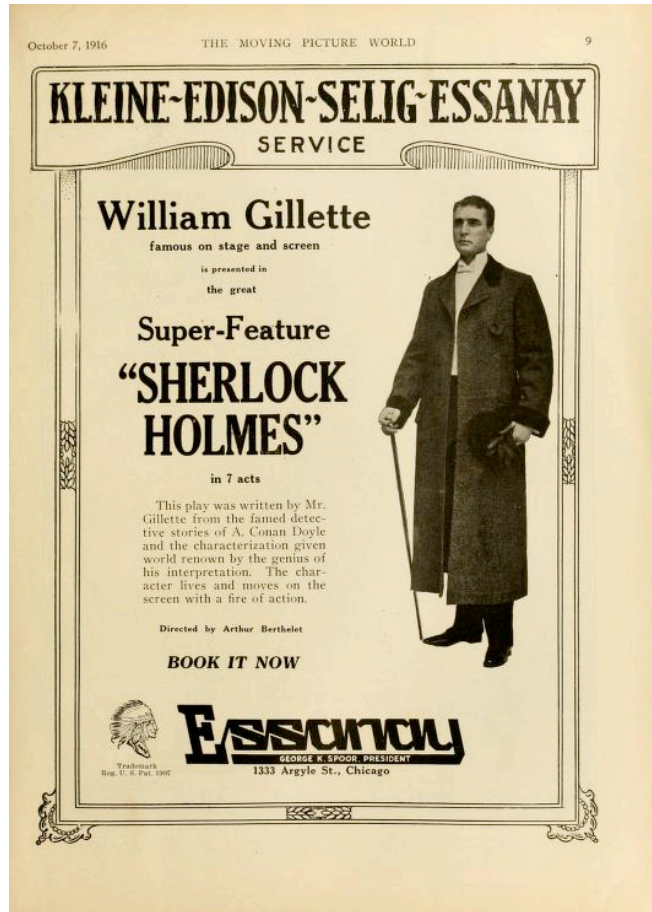
Late breaking GREAT news on the Gillette "Sherlock Holmes" silent film:

"I've found it! I've found it" (STUD)

**From a press release dated October 1, 2014, "The silent film version of 'Sherlock Holmes' starring William Gillette has been found! Long considered lost since its first release, the Gillette film is a vital missing link in the history of Holmes on screen. Directed by Arthur Berthelet and produced by Essanay Studios in 1916, it was discovered at the Cinémathèque Française only a few weeks ago... A nitrate dupe negative of *Sherlock Holmes* was found in the vaults of the Cinémathèque Française. Originally assembled for French distribution, the negative contains French flash titles and color annotations. This color information is quite surprising for an Essanay film, since usually Essanay's domestic releases were usually in black and white. The colors in this case were probably intended for French distribution. The film is now being digitally restored by the San Francisco Silent Film Festival and the Cinémathèque Française... The European premiere will take place at the Cinémathèque Française's festival of film restoration, Toute la Mémoire du Monde, in January 2015. The American premiere will take place at the San Francisco Silent Film festival in May 2015."⁷

⁶ "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 28 Apr. - Jun. 1916 pg. 1530

⁷ http://silentfilm.blob.core.windows.net/assets/SFSFF_SHERLOCKpressRELEASE.pdf



Long run rule in Denver - "A week run is now becoming the way to go. "Birth of a Nation" was the first successful week run, new shows like "Sherlock Holmes" will be able to fill house for week run."⁸

Spokes from the Hub by Marion Howard - "Well, when Essanay captured William Gillette it was a lucky day, and most of us old stagers (as to theater going) rather enjoyed the filmed version of "Sherlock Holmes" better than the speaking one. Maybe a familiarity with the lines and voices of the players aided in this view. The story is old, but Gillette does as a fine piece of work as has ever been given to the screen, so I would suggest 'repeats' on this all along the line."⁹

News of Los Angeles and Vicinity - "One night this week a burglar jimmied his way into the box office at Tally's Broadway Theater and made his escape

⁸ "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 28 Apr. - Jun. 1916 pg. 2281

⁹ "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 28 Apr. - Jun. 1916 pg. n119

with a few dollars in nickels and dimes. And the funny part of it was Sherlock Holmes (the film) was resting quietly and serenely only a few feet away."¹⁰

Chicago Newsletter - "Master of Make-Up" is a fitting title for Mr. Maupain. I have seen him in pictures in all the principal characters played by him while with Essanay, and, without exception, his acting and make-up were perfect. One only has to recall his impersonation of Prof. Moriarty in "Sherlock Holmes," produced by Essanay some time ago. That king of crooks had a glass eye, and anyone who watched closely Mr. Maupain's make-up for that part will remember that one of his eyes really appeared to have the constant stare of an artificial eye. It took considerable ingenuity to create this effect, and this is how it was done: Mr. Maupain pasted a piece of Gold beater's skin over his natural eye. Then he had an artist paint a human eye on the surface, which even in close-ups had all the semblance of a staring glass eye."¹¹

I don't remember anything about Moriarty having a glass eye? Was this part of Gillette's script changes?

Chicago Film Brevities - "Sir A. Conan Doyle, author of the Sherlock Holmes stories, who was an interested spectator of Essanay's production of the "Sherlock Holmes" play, in which William Gillette plays the title role, at The Alhambra Theater, London, Eng., recently, wrote, in part, as follows to the firm interested in the picture distribution in Great Britain and Ireland: "Before leaving London let me say how pleased I was with the Sherlock Holmes production. It is admirable, and will forever preserve Gillette's wonderful rendering of the part."¹²

Bruce McRae - There is a nice article with photo and bio for Bruce McRae. It is mainly an article about him being the last minute replacement for the principal player in "'The Chain Invisible'" being filmed 20 miles inland from Havana, Cuba, and how he barely made the steamer just as the gang plank was being drawn, after only a few hours notice. The reason I'm mentioning this is because Bruce McRae, an Englishman by birth, and nephew of Sir Charles Wyndham, born at Bombay, India, and educated at Boulogne sur Mer, France, was none other than William Gillette's first stage Dr. Watson."¹³

¹⁰ "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 28 Apr. - Jun. 1916 pg. n706

¹¹ "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 32 Apr. - Jun. 1917 pg. 255

¹² "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 34 Oct. - Dec. 1917 pg. 1636

¹³ "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 27 Jan. - Mar. 1916 pg. 960



Bruce McRae

1916 - "The Tale of a Coat" - Jack MacDermott (1893 - 1946) as Jack Standing a millionaire Sherlock Holmes. Kalem Film Co.

Kalem Co. Ad - "The Tale of a Coat" - "Bud is an amateur cracksman, Gus his pal, Jack the millionaire Sherlock who seeks to win Ethel's favor."¹⁴

"The Tale of a Coat" - Stories of the Films column - "The cast: Ethel (Ethel Teare); Mr. Dough (Charles Mulgro); Jack Standing (Jack MacDermott); Butler (Gus Leonard); the Master Cracksman (Bud Duncan). Produced by William Beaudine.

Gus and Bud are two blundering robbers, Jack a millionaire Sherlock Holmes, who gains Mr. Dough's consent to his marriage to Ethel when by pure luck he nabs the crooks after they have robbed the Dough home."¹⁵

"The Tale of a Coat" - Comments on the Films - "Sherlock Holmes is burlesqued in an amazing way during the action of this one reel comedy. As a master cracksman, Bud Duncan employes his comic energy without restraint, and Ethyl Teare, Charles Mulgro, Jack MacDermott and Gus Leonard do their best to keep pace with him."¹⁶

¹⁴ "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 27 Jan. - Mar. 1916 pg. 46

¹⁵ "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 27 Jan. - Mar. 1916 pg.657

¹⁶ "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 27 Jan. - Mar. 1916 pg. 800

1916 - "A Society Sherlock" - William Garwood (1884 - 1950) as Freddy De Peyster. Victor Film Co.

Universal to do Booth Novel - Article mentions "... to be followed immediately by another two-reel comedy to be done by Matt Moore and Jane Gail, entitled "The Society Sherlock."¹⁷

Big Writers with Universal - Article mentions comedy writer Paul West will be working on "The Society Sherlock".¹⁸



William Garwood

"A Society Sherlock" - Comments on the Films - "A light comedy number, in which Wm. Garwood plays Freddie De Peyster, a would be detective at a house party. He breaks the jar containing the missing necklace and saves the situation; also gets the girl. This is attractive and pleasing."¹⁹

"A Society Sherlock" - Stories of the Films - 'The cast: Freddy De Peyster (William Garwood); Vera Van Zandt (Irma Dawkins). Adapted by Norbert Lusk. Produced by William Garwood.

"Vera Van Zandt , a society girl, gives a weekend party. Freddy De Peyster, one of the guests, musters sufficient energy to propose to Vera, who tells him the man she marries must be a hero. Freddy gets hold of a volume of Sherlock Holmes, which he eagerly devours. The next day Vera receives a

¹⁷ "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 27 Jan. - Mar. 1916 pg. 1116

¹⁸ "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 27 Jan. - Mar. 1916 pg. 1148

¹⁹ "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 29 Jul. 1916 pg. 947

valuable necklace from her father has a birthday gift. On leaving the parlor that evening Vera forgets to take her necklace with her. Lenora, one of the guests suggests that they hide it so that she won't be so careless with diamonds. It is hidden in a vase on the center table. The loss is discovered and Vera's father informs the police. The police learn that the young man with the monocle, and Freddy, who is sleeping upstairs and under suspicion of being the culprit, is rudely awakened from his slumbers and rushed down into the parlor in scant attire. The police jostle him against the center of the table, causing the vase to fall. Freddy adjusts his monocle and there amidst the debris of shattered glass glisten the elusive diamonds. Thus Freddy has proved himself a veritable Sherlock, and in the final scene we see Vera crowning her hero with the necklace."²⁰

1916 - "Their First Divorce Case" - Mack Sennett and Fred Mace. Biograph Pictures.

Biograph Comedy Reissues - "Their First Divorce Case" - "Mr Murray again predominates in a 'Ten Karat Hero', issued with 'Their First Divorce Case', a cleverly devised story presenting Messrs. Sennett and Mace as burlesque detectives, unsuccessful disciples of Sherlock Holmes."²¹

It appears Biograph reissued "Their First Divorce Case" to take advantage of Sennett & Mace's popularity with Keystone Films, as well as to promote 'Ten Karat Hero' placed on a split reel with it.

1916 - "A Toyland Mystery" - Actors unknown. Taylor and Wheatley Films.

"A Toyland Mystery" - Stories of the Films column - Plot summation - Jerry likes Tillie. Tillie's Dad Snitz prefers Slowfoot, a local Sherlock Holmes, for Tillie. Bosco the Bulldog steals a leg of lamb from Snitz's butcher shop. Snitz promises his daughter's hand in marriage to whoever can find the thief. Slowfoot the detective tails the clues, while meanwhile Jerry who had witnessed Bosco do it and kept quiet, now turns in the thief and wins Tillie's hand.²²

²⁰ "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 29 Jul. 1916 pgs. 990/991

²¹ "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 27 Jan. - Mar. 1916 pg. 1148

²² "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 27 Jan. - Mar. 1916 pg. 2067

1916 - "The Double Double Cross" - William Dangman as Harold Hopeful.
Vitagraph Film Co.

"The Double Double Cross" - Stories of the Films - Cast: Harold Hopeful (William Dangman) - (plot summary - quickie) - Harold lands a job by outsmarting all the applicants by pretending to be the boss and telling everyone the position is filled go home, they leave and being the only applicant Harold gets the job. A chief clerk who gambled away money plots with another clerk to get the money back. ... "Their plans are overheard by Harold, who decides to do a little Sherlock Holmes 'stuff'." "Gumshoe Harold" switches the money with blank paper, so when the chief clerk pays back with the wrong envelope and tries to pin the crime on Harold, it all backfires and Harold becomes the chief clerk.²³

End of Part Thirteen
1916 Continues in Part Fourteen

²³ "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 28 Apr. - Jun. 1916 pg. 1384

