

Silent Sherlock Sherlock Holmes and the Silent Film Era

by

Howard Ostrom

Part Twelve (1915)

1914 gave us the first two films from the series of seven related stories known as "Der Hund von Baskerville" series. 1915 would give us three through six, and 1916 the seventh and final of the series. There is no Dr. Watson in this series. Due to the numerous different language names for foreign films I will go with the English titles from now on to simplify things a bit.

1914 - "The Hound of the Baskervilles"- Alwin Neuss as Sherlock Holmes. Vitascope Pictures (Germany).

1914 - "The Isolated House"- Alwin Neuss as Sherlock Holmes. Vitascope Pictures (Germany).

1915 - "How the Hound of the Baskervilles Returned"- Alwin Neuss as Sherlock Holmes. Vitascope Pictures (Germany).

1915 - "The Uncanny Room"- Alwin Neuss as Sherlock Holmes. Vitascope Pictures (Germany).

1915 - "The Dark Castle"- Eugen Berg as Sherlock Holmes. Vitascope Pictures (Germany).

1915 - "Dr. MacDonald's Sanitarium"- Erich Kaiser-Titz as Sherlock Holmes. Vitascope Pictures (Germany).

1916 - "The House Without Any Windows"- Erich Kaiser-Titz as Sherlock Holmes. Vitascope Pictures (Germany).

Here are the comments and an ad I've found for some of this series.

THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES

A four part sensational drama adapted from the story by CONAN DOYLE. 1-3-6 sheet posters.



THEN THE ICEMAN CAME

A one reel American drama especially made to cure chronic grouches. 1 sheet posters.

A TRIP TO MADEIRA

A colored scenic combined with

WILD BIRDS

(SCOTLAND) A colored educational. 1 sheet posters.

THE PATHÉ EXCHANGE INC.

25 WEST 45TH STREET
NEW YORK

"The Hound of the Baskervilles" - Film Version of Sir A. Conan Doyle's Novel made by Pathe Freres Has Interesting Side. Reviewed by M. I. MacDonald

"It would be impossible to base a film production on any of the sensational works of the novelist A. Conan Doyle, without it being in some measure entertaining; nor can the excitement prevalent in the adventures of the detective Sherlock Holmes fail to thrill the average human being to the very marrow of his bones. In choosing "The Hound of the Baskervilles" Pathe Freres can have made no mistake, for even though the film version of the story may once in a while miss a cog, or so far presume upon the author's rights as to interpolate a scene or situation of which the original story is not guilty, the production has evidently been robbed of very little if any of its weirdly thinning characteristics. The filming of the story on the continent, presumably in Germany, interferes to some extent with the English atmosphere intended to be portrayed. This is perhaps as noticeable in the mannerisms of some of the players as in any other way. According to the film story Sir Henry Baskerville, upon the death of his uncle, whose estate

he inherits, comes to Baskerville and falls a prey to the intrigues of Stapleton the caretaker of Baskerville and who, it later divulges, is the disgraced nephew of the deceased Sir Charles Baskerville seeking to gain possession of the estate. He it is who keeps the Great Dane in concealment, rumors of which have terrified the neighborhood; and he it is that intercepts the letter of Sir Henry to Sherlock Holmes, impersonating the famous detective himself. Later, however, the real Sherlock Holmes appears on the scene, and the events which occur when the great detective commences his investigation of Baskerville and its surroundings are as sensationally interesting as anyone would care to see. There is a marked similarity between the men playing Stapleton and Sherlock Holmes; the difference between them is just enough to explode the idea one man may be doubling on the parts. The production is an acceptable one, and where a spectator is unfamiliar with the story we cannot conceive that there could be any adverse criticism."¹

"The Hound of the Baskervilles" - Feature Film Stories - "A drama adopted from the novel of the famous author, Sir A. Conan Doyle - Four parts; All who have read the celebrated novel remember the Great Dane that terrified the superstitious community surrounding the home of the Earl of Baskerville. The death of Sir Charles of Baskerville was connected by the tenantry with the reported appearance of the dreaded hound. Subsequent to the Earl's death, his nephew, Henry, fell heir to the estate. He was notified by the attorney to come to Baskerville but received a warning from another source to remain away. Despite the warning, Sir Henry goes to the manor, where he meets Mr. Stapleton, the caretaker. He also learns of his Uncle's animosity against Roger, another nephew who was disinherited. Following his coming, Sir Henry soon has cause to fear the hound. He sends an urgent call to Sherlock Holmes, a great detective. The call is intercepted by Stapleton, who impersonates Holmes. The real Holmes learns of the interloper and goes to Baskerville to investigate. A series of remarkable and terrifying events follow, which almost result in the death of Holmes as well as the Earl and the entire household. Even Miss Lyons, Sir Henry's charming neighbor, nearly becomes a victim of the evil genius who is plotting the ruin of Baskerville. After a harrowing experience, the detective succeeds in killing the monstrous hound. Holmes doubles his efforts to unravel the dreadful mystery and enlists the aid of Barrymore, a discharged servant. Barrymore informs Holmes that Stapleton is the author of all the devilry. The detective lays a trap for Stapleton, who unwittingly falls into it. After a terrific struggle he is overcome by Holmes and Barrymore. Not until his confessions it is discovered that Stapleton is in reality the disgraced nephew, Roger, who for

¹ "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 23 Jan. - Mar. 1915 pg. 1302

revenge, planned the destruction of Sir Henry in a desperate endeavor to gain control of the Baskerville estate."²

"The Isolated House" - Stories of the Films - "Under the assumed name of Stapleton, Roger Baskerville is condemned to death for being instrumental in the death of a relative and probable heir to the Baskerville estates. After his plea of clemency is denied, he overpowers his keeper and escapes, taking up residence near Baskerville Castle, and announcing himself to Lord and Lady Baskerville as Loris Collamore, a new neighbor. The next day he succeeds in inveigling them into a submersible house which he has built in a nearby lake, and making them prisoners. He then goes to the castle and announces to the servants that he is a relative of Lord Henry and has come to take charge of his affairs. The servants become suspicious of the intruder, and, being mystified at the strange disappearance of their master and mistress, seek the aid of Sherlock Holmes, who had been mainly instrumental in ensuring the conviction of Roger. The greg detective takes up the case and in the course of his investigations is locked in a secret closet in the castle by the criminal, who has recognized him. Armed with a pocket wireless outfit, Holmes calls an assistant and is quickly released. Later, Holmes and his assistant, see the submersible house and manager to get inside, where they learn that the Baskervilles are prisoners. When Roger sees that his nefarious scheme has been frustrated, he breaks the windows, thus allowing the water to enter, but in the struggle which follows Holmes reaches the raising mechanism and the house slowly rises out of the lake. The prisoners are freed and Roger is captured. But as they leave the house he breaks away from Holmes and again enters his stronghold, sinking the house and disappearing from sight. A terrific explosion tells those on the shore that the villain has used one of the bombs, that he had hidden within, thus ending his career of crime."³

1915 - "Sherlock, The Boob Detective"- Frank Moore (1880 - 1924) as the Boob. Crown City Films.

"Sherlock, The Boob Detective" - Feature Film Stories - "Fred and Rena, society crooks, complete a successful foray and steal the cash and valuables from a fee lunch stand in one of the city parks. Their theft arouses the entire town, and as a result, the Boob determines to become a detective and hunt down the daring criminals. Accordingly, he purchases a manual which gives instructions in the art of detecting and sets out upon the case. His first clue

² "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 23 Jan. - Mar. 1915 pg. 1526

³ "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 24 Apr. - Jun. 1915 pg. 904

leads to the arrest of a burro. Meantime Fred and Rena have carried away the safe of the National Bank. The Boob runs across them but they turn the tables on him, making him a captive and tie him to the safe with a stick of dynamite underneath. The safe blows up. Fred and Rena rush to examine its contents, but the blast has only freed the Boob and he makes them prisoners, just as the city detective arrives and takes them in charge."⁴

1915 - "Heavy Villains"- Flora Finch (1867 - 1940) played a female Sherlock Holmes, know as Serena Slim - the slender sleuth. Vitagraph Films.



"Flora Finch as a female Sherlock Holmes; Hughie Black as the village cut-up; Kate Prince as a cook; and John T. Kelly as a woman hater; are members of a cast in which Cissy Friz-Gerald, Charles Brown, William Shea, Arthur Cozine and Ethyl Corcoran play straight parts, in a paradoxically entitled comedy "Heavy Villains.""⁵

1915 -"Ham, The Detective" - Lloyd V. Hamilton (1891 - 1935) as Ham, the modern Sherlock, and Bud Duncan (1883 - 1960) as Bud, a pocket edition Watson. Kalem Films.

"Ham, The Detective" - "Sherlock Holmes burlesque which ends up with Ham & Bud and the criminals all ending up arrested."⁶

⁴ "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 24 Apr. - Jun. 1915 pgs. 1204/1206

⁵ The Photo-Play Review Page 14 April 6, 1915

⁶ The Photo-Play Review Page 11/13 May 11, 1915



"Ham, The Detective" - Comments on the Films - "If one swallow does not make a summer, neither does one pair of false whiskers make a detective. This is proved conclusively, in the present 'Ham' comedy. Other secrets of Sherlock Holmes' profession are amusingly unmasked while Ham and Bud attempt to run down a gang of Black Hands."⁷

1915 - "Tillie's Tomato Surprise" - Tom McNaughton (1867 - 1923) as Percy Jitney, the New York Sherlock Holmes. Lubin Films.

"Tillie's Tomato Surprise" - (Lubin) - "... 'Your name is Colin Campbell?' queried the New York Sherlock Holmes. 'Y-y-yes, sir,' said the trembling Campbell, not knowing what was coming next, although his conscience was absolutely clear. 'You are Scotch?' asked the detective, and in the face of his Scottish accent Campbell could not say nay. 'That is all' said the detective. 'I want you for bigamy,' and it took Campbell a full hour to convince the detective he was not the Colin Campbell who was wanted for deceiving two trusting, unsophisticated, and, of course, beautiful maidens."⁸

1915 - "The Missing Ruby" - Bessie Eyton (1890 - 1965) played Bessie Blake, a female Sherlock Holmes. Selig Films.

"The Missing Ruby" - Comments on the Films - Another lady detective drama -- without the crooks. Nevertheless, a ver valuable Ruby disappears from a jewel case belonging to a young heiress, and a female Sherlock Holmes is

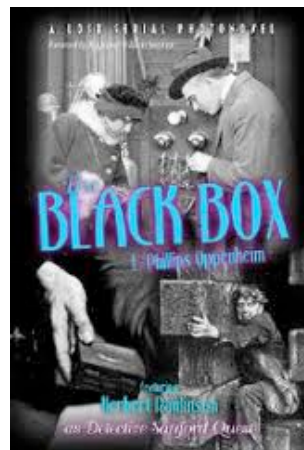
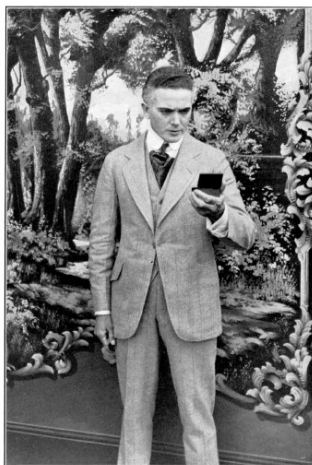
⁷ "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 24 Apr. - Jun. 1915 pg. 1776

⁸ The Photo-Play Review Page 12 August 7, 1915



called to solve the mystery. This she does, with neatness and dispatch. Bessie Eyton, as the detective, continued to look like a lady, even in her maid's costume."⁹

1915 - "The Black Box" - Herbert Rawlinson (1885 - 1953) as Sanford Quest, a Criminologist, a modernized Sherlock Holmes. Universal Films.



"The Black Box" Ready for Release. Serial (15 installments each of two reels) - "... The principal character is Sanford Quest, a Criminologist, a modernized Sherlock Holmes. But where this famous character detected crime and apprehended criminals by the force of his observations and logic alone, this new creation....is far better equipped as far as moving pictures are

⁹ "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 23 Jan. - Mar. 1915 pg. 1763

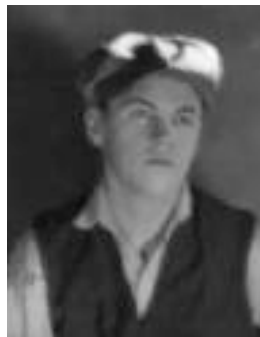
concerned. Deduction and logic are difficult to represent on the screen. Sanford Quest brings to his aid all the modern and ultra modern inventions of science. By an invention of his own he is able to see over the telephone wire the person who is talking to him. He has ... the pocket wireless telephone... a compact and powerful explosive...and a hundred other contrivances Sanford Quest is a detective deluxe."¹⁰

Eat your heart out Benedict Cumberbatch, Sanford Quest had a cell phone before you did!

1915 - "Sherlock Sammy" - Harry Fisher, Jr. as Sherlock Sammy. Kriterion Films.

"Sherlock Sammy" - "Director Jack Byrne and his company have just completed for The Santa Barbara Motion Picture Company, releasing on the Kriterion Program, a number of new comedies and dramas. Harry Fisher, Jr., is featured in a comedy, entitled "Sherlock Sammy".¹¹

1915 - "Ima Simp - Detective" - Ben Deeley (1878 - 1924) as Ima Simp. Balboa Films.



"Ima Simp - Detective" - Stories of the Films - "Slim Jim, a slippery-fingered crook, seeking a chance to make a good haul, takes advantage of the opportunity, robs a house and makes his getaway. At the same time the daughter of the victim decides to elope and joins her fiancée by means of the ladder-route. The eloping couple hire a buggy and hasten away to escape her father. They are seen by Ima Simp, almost a detective, who mistakes them for Slim Jim and his female accomplice. Ima Simp decides to do some sleuthing that will make Sherlock Holmes seem like a back-number

¹⁰ "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 23 Jan. - Mar. 1915 pg. 1776

¹¹ "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 23 Jan. - Mar. 1915 pg. 1914g

and immediately gets on the trail. The chase that follows is a hummer and is funny enough to make the Sphinx laugh. Does Simp catch the fugitives? Sure he does, but at that moment the girl's father appears on the scene and thanks the young man for eloping with his daughter , thus taking her off his hands. Poor Simp then realizes that as a detective he's a lemon."¹²

1915 - "The Gentleman Burglar" - Lillian Marshall, as Irma Horne, Girl Detective. Selig Films.

"The Gentleman Burglar" - Stories of the Films - "Jim Drapper, society leader, reads in the paper of the robberies perpetrated, by Broadway Jim, a gentleman burglar. He jokingly tells his father that he would like to be a Sherlock Holmes and bring Broadway Jim to justice." In what ensues Irma Horne, a clever girl detective, is also on the trail of Broadway Jim. She is suspicious of Jim Drapper. Meanwhile Broadway Jim, noticing his resemblance to Jim Drapper, jumps Jim Drapper and steals his invitation to a society affair, which Irma in disguise is on guard at. When Broadway Jim, who she thinks is Jim Drapper makes his move she makes her move and captures him, only to have Jim Drapper show up and totally confuse her."¹³

1915 - "The Road o' Strife" - Lupin Films.

"The Road o' Strife" - Reviews of Current Productions - serial part 6 - reviewer comments "...In the sixth installment the spectator feels as if he were in the middle of a Sherlock Holmes story, thoroughly absorbed and intensely curious to see how it will end. It is said that President Wilson beguiles the cares of state by reading just that kind of detective story...."¹⁴

1915 - "A Case of Limburger" - Actors unknown. Mina Films.

"A Case of Limburger" - Stories of the Films - "Keen Hawksby, the head of the police, fancies himself a detective genius on the lines of Mons Lecoq or Sherlock Holmes -- in short, he is regarded by himself and his fellow townsmen as a Napoleon in the world of detection ... " The plot in short Hawksby and his two admirers thinking they are on the trail of a bomber follow a farmer delivering a case of limburger cheese to his aunt, and they

¹² "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 24 Apr. - Jun. 1915 pg. 306

¹³ "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 25 Jul. - Sep. 1915 pg. 447

¹⁴ "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 24 Apr. - Jun. 1915 pg. 1443

grab the wrong man until the aunt rescues the farmer from them in time to enjoy a supper of limburger, bread and ale."¹⁵



This film title rivals 1910's "A Jar of Cranberry Sauce" for the best title prize!

An actor named Hector Dion (1881 - 19??) would show up in two Thanhouser Sherlock Holmes films in 1915.

1915 - "The Crimson Sabre" - Hector Dion as Sherlock Holmes.
Thanhouser Films.

1915 - "The Crogmere Ruby" - Hector Dion as Sherlock Holmes.
Thanhouser Films.

"The Crogmere Ruby" - Stories of the Films - "The Crogmere was stolen from the country house of its owner in England. Certain clues convinced the Scotland Yard authorities that the criminal would try to escape on a certain liner. The New York Police received word that the Crogmere had been stolen and was supposed to be on a certain liner, with the further information that "Inspector Bolton of Scotland Yard was on the boat." The liner has only been out one day when the first-class passengers knew they had a Scotland Yard detective in their midsts. The wireless operator gave further information by showing a maid-servant, in who he was interested, a wireless addressed to the supposed Sherlock Holmes and signed only with the letters "S.Y." It was noticed that "Sherlock Holmes" paid much attention to a young lady and young man. When the vessel arrived in New York a police captain and several men boarded the boat to aid Inspector Bolton. "Sherlock Holmes" told the captain that the young Lothario was the criminal and the man was promptly taken into custody. His stateroom was searched and the ruby was found hidden away in a large cake of soap. The officers were escorting their

¹⁵ "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 25 Jul. - Sep. 1915 pg. 1204

prisoner away in triumph when the young woman in the case interfered. She induced the police captain to let her look at the ruby and promptly declared it was simply glass. Closer scrutiny convinced the official that she was right. He was doubtful what further course to pursue, when the young pointed to the pipe of Sherlock Holmes and whispered to the Captain, "It's the first day since we left the other side that his pipe has not been lit." She then reached over, grabbed the pipe before Sherlock could interfere, emptied its contents in her hand and revealed the ruby which had been hidden under a thin layer of tobacco. The bogus detective tried to flee, but was promptly captured. Finding that the game was up, he made a full confession, admitting that he had stolen the gem. He said he knew the police would be on the alert so he had tried to escape a personal search, pretending to be an inspector from Scotland Yard, and had planted the bogus ruby in the young man's possession expecting that he would be locked up, giving the real criminal a chance to escape. It was later revealed that the young girl was Inspector Bolton of Scotland Yard and had been watching the pseudo detective all the way across the Atlantic."¹⁶

1915 - "The Midnight Prowlers" - Walter Stull (1879 - 1961) as Loos Pokes and Ethel Burton as female Sherlock Holmes. Vim Films.



"The Midnight Prowlers" - Stories of the Films - Summation - Mr. & Mrs. Jabbs are nervous about the neighborhood and each independently decide to hire a detective. "...Mrs. Jabb hiring a male sleuth in the person of Loos Pokes and Mr. Jabbs hiring a female Sherlock Holmes." The detectives end up meeting and spooning while the house is being burglarized. When a bugler stumbles and makes noise, the detectives and the Jabbs rush in only to have each detective grab the Jabb they didn't know.¹⁷

¹⁶ "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 25 Jul. - Sep. 1915 pg. 1204

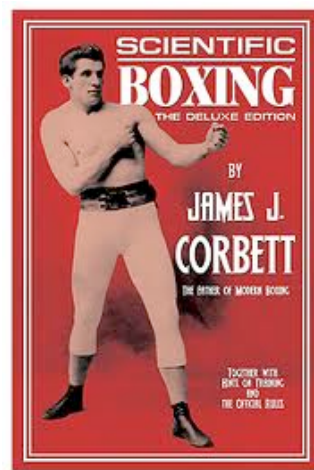
¹⁷ "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 26 Oct. - Dec. 1915 pgs. 1018/1019

1915 - "The Alster Case" - John Cossar (1858 - 1935) as Trask, the Sherlock Holmes of the story. Essanay Films.



"The Alster Case" - Reviews of Current Productions - "Trask, the Sherlock Holmes of the story, is seen following up every clue that gives promise of leading to the guilt or innocence of each of the five suspects. He weaves a web around each turn which points to guilt, but in every save one the investigation shows innocence."¹⁸

1915 - "The Burglar and The Lady" - Calvin Reiland (1886 - 1974) as Stone/Sherlock Holmes and World Heavyweight Champion 'Gentleman Jim' Corbett (1866 - 1933) as Raffles . Sun Photoplay Co..



¹⁸ "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 26 Oct. - Dec. 1915 pg. 1845

"The Burglar and The Lady" - Reviews of Current Productions - Stars Heavyweight Champion James J. Corbett as Raffles. ..." The author is careful to make his law-breaking hero a sympathetic figure. He is a courteous, kiddy and wonderfully resourceful person, whose wits are pitted against the most astute detective of the age. This time he is called Stone instead of Sherlock Holmes. ..." ¹⁹

A few notes of interest on actors in "The Burglar and The Lady". James J. Corbett once portrayed Sherlock Holmes in a burlesque show, "Round New York in Eighty Minutes", in a comedic skit entitled 'The Remarkable Pipe Dream of Mr. Sherlock Holmes'. Fraunie Fraunholz, Burstup Holmes, played the Butler.

1915 - "No Smoking" - Jessie Terry as Aunt Julia. Lubin Films.

"No Smoking" - Stories of Films - "...Aunt Julia, with her 'Sherlock eye', finds a stray bundle of ashes lying about, and to her questions Wilkins explains that it is naught but tooth powder," ²⁰

1915 - "A Study in Skarlit" - Fred Evans (1889 - 1951) as Sherlock Homz. Pioneer Film Co. (U.K.).

1915 - "A Scream in the Night" or, "**Ein Schrei in der Nacht**" - Alwin Neuss as Sherlock Holmes and Edward Seefelu as Dr. Watson. Dekla Films (Germany).

"A Scream in the Night" - German Trade Notes column - "The premier offering of the Dekla film, 'A Scream in the Night', took place in the elegant Marmorhaus Lichtspiele on the Kurfurstendamm. The film, A Sherlock Holmes drama, was written by Paul Rosenhayn, and arranged by Alwin Neuss, who has won great popularity through his numerous interpretations of the world-famed English detective, chief among which as Holmes in 'The Hound of the Baskerville.' In addition to directing the production of this interesting picture, Mr. Neuss played with much success the difficult part of Sherlock Holmes. Mr. Neuss, who was formerly engaged in London where he played dramatic parts in the Colosseum, Palace, and Empire theaters, is admirably fitted for the Holmes role. Contrary to a recent American criticism of the European depiction of the famous detective, this Sherlock Holmes

¹⁹ "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 26 Oct. - Dec. 1915 pg. 2198

²⁰ "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 26 Oct. - Dec. 1915 pg. 2233

neglected appearing at a soiree in his checkered cap and with the inevitable pipe in mouth. Mr. Neuss is a great admirer of the American picture and is one of the German actors and directors who believe that much may be learned from the American films. That Mr. Neuss has made a careful study of American films is plainly evident in 'A Scream in the Night.' The action of the play is supposed to be in America. Although Mr. Neuss has never been in America, he produced a picture which is one of the few German films of this kind which have not been over-Americanized. The director who is a great admirer of the American simplicity and naturalness in film acting instilled into his cast much of this spirit and has thereby produced a work which pass muster even in America. The music to the film was arranged by Mr. Seigbert Goldschmidt, manager of the Marmorhaus, and helped greatly towards the success of the picture"²¹

Alwin Neuss played Holmes on numerous occasions. We may finally add what is thought to be a Holmes film:

1915 - "William Voss Milliondieb" or, "William Voss the Thief of Millions" - Alwin Neuss as Sherlock Holmes and Theodore Burgardt as William Voss. Meinhart Films (Germany).

To finish-up the year 1915 we will once again list some foreign Sherlock Holmes silent films.

1915 - "Der Floh von Baskerville" or, "The Flea of the Baskervilles" - Actors unknown. Luna Films (Germany).

1915 - "Kri Kri contro Sherlock Holmes" or, "Bloomer Tricks Sherlock Holmes" (U.K.) - Actors unknown. Società Italiana Cines (Italy).

1915 - "La disfatta di Sherlock Holmes" or, "The Defeat of Sherlock Holmes" (U.K.) - Actors unknown. Società Italiana Cines (Italy).

End of Part Twelve
1916 Begins in Part Thirteen

²¹ "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 27 Jan. - Mar. 1916 pg. 434