

6. Trouble in Bohemia

Arthur Conan Doyle

About the writer :

Arthur Conan Doyle was a Scottish writer most noted for creating the legendary world famous fictional character ‘Sherlock Holmes’ and his loyal assistant Dr. Watson. He wrote more than sixty ‘Sherlock Holmes’ mystery stories, which attracted the readers all over the world. Some of his notable ‘Sherlock Holmes’ works include *The Stories of Sherlock Holmes*, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, *The Hound of Baskervilles*, *The Case Book of Sherlock Holmes* and *Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*. He also wrote many non-fictional books, works of fantasy, science fiction, historical novels and poetry and also created the fictional character named *Professor Challenger* and wrote a series of novels based on him.

* * * * *

Whenever Sherlock Holmes spoke of Irene Adler, it was in terms of great respect. She was always *the* Woman. This did not mean that he was in anyway sentimental about her, but throughout his long career Irene Adler had been one of the few persons who had proven to be just as clever as Sherlock Holmes himself.

Anyway, I was in Holmes’ apartment one day when a tall, handsome man, dressed in the uniform of a foreign country, came to see him. The man wore a mask and pretended to represent a second person, but Holmes soon recognized the man, addressed him as “Your Majesty,” and the fellow then admitted that he was the king of Bohemia. He had come, he said, to ask Sherlock Holmes’ help in a matter of great importance. It seems that five years earlier, before he had become king, he had been in Warsaw on a visit and had fallen in love with a beautiful American actress, Miss Irene Adler.

“I was crown prince at the time,” he explained. “And I was young. Shortly after, I became king. Irene Adler was not of royal blood. My family and the members of the government found out about the matter and naturally insisted that I must give Miss Adler up. I loved her deeply, but my first responsibility was, naturally, to my country.”

The king went on to explain that he was now about to be married to a princess of

one of the neighboring countries and that Irene Adler, who was still apparently in love with him, had said that she was going to write to the princess and tell her all.

“Is it money Ms. Adler wants?” asked Holmes.

“Heavens no!” said the king. “She is not that kind of person. She simply insists that she still loves me and she refuses to let me marry someone else.”

“I suppose she has some letters of yours, but we can prove that they are false,” said Holmes.

“They are written on my own private paper and in my own handwriting. She also has my photograph.”

“We can prove that the paper was stolen and that your handwriting was copied. Anyone can buy your photograph.”

“Unfortunately, she and I are both in the same photograph together,” said the king.

“That is quite different,” said Holmes. “Have you tried to get the photograph from her in any way?”

“I have had the police examine her apartment. I have had her stopped on the street and also while travelling, but nothing has been found in her pocketbook or in her travelling bags. You see, Mr. Holmes not only is Irene Adler a beautiful woman, but she is clever and highly intelligent as well.”

Holmes obtained all the additional information he could from the king and the next day left home early. I happened to meet him that night outside our house just as he was getting home. I did not recognize him, naturally, because he was disguised as an old cab driver. It seems that he had spent all day in and around Irene Adler’s home talking with other cab drivers and with anybody who seemed to know anything about Miss Adler. He had seen her personally and, by one means or another, had even talked with her.

“She is all that the king says she is and more,” he said. “She is a beautiful woman. I also discovered a surprising fact: Irene Adler got married at five o’ clock today to a Mr. Godfrey Norton, previously her lawyer. I do not know whether this makes the matter more simple or more complicated. Although she herself is an honorable person, who knows what advantages her husband, a lawyer, may see in a photograph of her and the king of Bohemia taken together. We must get the photograph by all means. I am sure the

photograph is in her home and tomorrow, Watson, you must help me to go there and get it.”

While Holmes was telling me this, we stood at the front door. A young man in a long overcoat passed the street.

“Good night, Sherlock Holmes!” said the young man.

“Now, who the devil could have recognized me in this disguise?” said Holmes. “That voice also sound familiar.”

Anyway, the next day five o’ clock in the afternoon Holmes, now disguised as a priest, was walking in front of Irene Adler’s home when Miss Adler arrived from her daily ride in the park. As she stepped out of her cab, Holmes pretended to faint; several people came to help him, and Ms. Adler finally told them to carry him into her living room. As Holmes had directed, I stood waiting during all this time in the garden, just outside the living room window, and at a signal from Holmes inside I threw some lighted pieces of paper into the room through the window. There was a cry of “Fire! Fire!” from one of the servants, and I then disappeared. Several hours later Holmes arrived home, quite pleased with himself and with the satisfactory way everything had turned out.

“It’s an old trick, Watson,” he said, “but it worked just as I expected. When someone cried “Fire!” Irene Adler ran, almost automatically, to get the one thing of greatest importance in the house- the photograph. It is hidden in a secret place in one of the walls. She did not remove the photograph because when she saw that the fire was only a matter of a few burning papers, she stopped, but she did all that was necessary to show me exactly where the photograph is hidden. Tomorrow we shall go there with the king and with several policemen and get the photograph.”

The next day, however, when Holmes went to Miss Adler’s house, he had one of the greatest shocks of his long career. There was no one at home, and Miss Adler and all her servants had apparently gone away. Holmes went at once to the secret place in the wall. The photograph was there but there was this message with it. It read:

Dear Sherlock Holmes,

I had been told that the king would probably go to you for help in getting the photograph. Thus, I was expecting you any day. First, I recognized your disguise as a cab driver and then followed you to your apartment just to make sure it was you. I was the

young man who passed in the street and spoke to you. Don't forget that I too am an artist. Yesterday I also recognized your little trick of gaining entrance to my house and forcing me to show you where the photograph was hidden. But it is not important now. The photograph is here for you. I am married now to a man much better than the king, and we have gone away together. My husband loves me deeply, and I am in love with him. Clearly, I have no need of the photograph any longer!

Yours truly,
Irene Adler

About the story

The story 'Trouble in Bohemia' is about Sherlock Holmes and Miss Irene Adler; both fictional characters created by Arthur Conan Doyle. The story narrates how the king of Bohemia hires the famous detective Sherlock Holmes to get some letters and photograph back from Miss Adler. But Miss Adler beats Sherlock Holmes at his own game.

GLOSSARY

sentimental (adj.)	:	(1) relating to emotions rather than reason (2) having intense feelings about someone or something
pretend (v)	:	to behave in a particular way, in order to make other people believe something that is not true
mask (n)	:	a covering for part or all of the face
recognized (adj.)	:	notable, honored
give up (ph.v)	:	to surrender, to stop or to quit
apparently (adv)	:	clearly, obviously
disguised (v)	:	appeared in a changed way so that your real identity is not known to others
cab (n)	:	a taxi
honorable (adj)	:	respectable
faint (v)	:	to become unconscious
turned out (ph.v)	:	resulted
probably (adv.)	:	perhaps, likely

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS :

A. Choose the correct alternative:

1. Miss Irene Adler was _____.
(a) a secret detective (b) an assistant
(c) an American actress (d) a relative of Sherlock Holmes
2. The king wanted _____ from Miss Adler.
(a) some documents (b) letters and photograph
(c) money (d) address
3. Sherlock Holmes disguised himself as a _____ at first.
(a) priest (b) cab driver
(c) servant (d) bank officer
4. Miss Adler got married to _____.
(a) Mr. Godfrey Norton (b) Sherlock Holmes
(c) The King of Bohemia (d) Dr. Watson
5. _____ bade "good night" to Sherlock Holmes.
(a) A friend (b) Miss Irene Adler
(c) Mr. Godfrey Norton (d) The King

B. Answer the following questions in 20 to 30 words each:

1. Why did the king want his letters and photograph back?
2. What were Sherlock Holmes disguises to solve the case?
3. Where did Miss Irene Adler hide the letters and the photograph?
4. Why did the king write letters to Irene Adler?
5. Why could the letters not be proved false?
6. Why was Sherlock Holmes interested in getting the letters and photograph at the earliest?

C. Answer the following questions in 115-125 words each:

1. What trick did Sherlock Holmes use to find the place where letters and photograph were hidden?
2. Discuss the character of Miss Irene Adler.
3. The story proves Sherlock Holmes to be less intelligent than Miss Irene Adler. Do you agree?

D. State True or False:

1. Miss Irene Adler wanted to extract money from the king in exchange of letters and photograph (True/False)
2. Miss Adler knew that the king would go to Holmes for help in getting back the photograph. (True/False)
3. Miss Irene Adler wished “good night” to Sherlock Holmes. (True/False)
4. At first Sherlock Holmes disguised himself as a priest. (True/False)
5. Miss Irene Adler herself did not want to keep the letters and photograph. (True/False)

E. Creative Writing :

Imagine that your friend has planned a mischief on you but you, very intelligently, beat him at his own game.